

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 264474

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO JIDDA, CAIRO, AMMAN,
MOGADISCIO, KHARTOUM, MUSCAT, MANAMA, DOHA, ABU DHABI,
TEHRAN, KUWAIT, DHAHRAN, BAGHDAD, TEL AVIV, TRIPOLI,
ADDIS ABABA, BEIRUT, TUNIS, RABAT, LONDON, SECDEF, COMIDEASTFOR,
USCINCEUR FROM SANA OCT 27:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L SANA 4220

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, YE
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT GHASHMI ON INTERNAL/EXTERNAL SITUATION

REF: SANA 4215 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: DURING OCT 26 MEETING,
GHASHMI EMPHASIZED THAT INTERNAL SITUATION IS
UNDER CONTROL. DESPITE SOME ANTI-REGIME ACTIVITIES
BY LEFTISTS IN THE SOUTH. ACKNOWLEDGING CONTINUED
RUMORS BLAMING HIM FOR HAMDI'S DEATH, GHASHMI
FIRMLY DENIED THEM WHILE PROMISING TO CONTINUE
HAMDI'S POLICIES, PARTICULARLY CLOSE REALTIONS WITH
THE U.S. AND SAUDI ARABIA. GHASHMI CONVEYED
IMPRESSION OF CONFIDENT MAN. GIVEN YEMEN'S
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HISTORY OF INTRIGUE AND INSTABILITY, HOWEVER, IT IS
STILL DIFFICULT TO STATE CATEGORICALLY THAT GHASHMI
CAN SUCCEED IN REMAINING IN POWER EVEN THOUGH
IT APPEARS FOR NOW THAT HE IS DETERMINED TO CONSOLIDATE
BOTH HIS POLITICAL AND MILITARY POSITIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. ON OCT 26, AT MY REQUEST, PRESIDENT AHMAD
AL-GHASHMI RECEIVED ME IN HIS OFFICE AT THE MILITARY
COMMAND HEADQUARTERS. PRIMARY PURPOSE OF MY CALL
WAS TO DELIVER PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE (SEE REFTEL)

BUT ALSO I TOOK OCCASION TO ENGAGE IN TOUR D'HORIZON WITH GHASHMI OVER A VARIETY OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MATTERS.

3. AT THE ONSET OF THE HALF HOUR CONVERSATION, GHASHMI APOLOGIZED FOR NOT SEEING ME MORE OFTEN DURING THE LAST TWO WEEKS, BUT THAT PRESS OF WORK PREVENTED HIM FROM DOING SO. HE ALSO ADMITTED THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO GIVE THE EXCUSE TO OTHER AMBASSADORS TO ASK FOR CALL BECAUSE THIS WOULD HAVE WASTED HIS TIME. HE HASTENED TO ADD THAT I SHOULD, HOWEVER, NEVER HESITATE TO COME TO SEE HIM WHENEVER I WISHED BECAUSE HE CONSIDERS THE US AND THE AMERICAN EMBASSY AS SINCERE FRIENDS OF YEMEN NOT BOUND BY USUAL PROTOCOL.

4. I REPLIED THAT I FULLY REALIZED HIS TIME HAS BEEN LIMITED AND THAT I, TOO, HAD NO DESIRE TO IMPOSE ON HIM DURING THESE DIFFICULT DAYS. I NOTED JOKINGLY THAT I WAS SURE HE HAS BEEN BESIEGED BY ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS OFFERING ADVICE AND EXPRESSING THEIR CONFIDENTIAL

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OPINIONS. (HE LAUGHINGLY AGREED SAYING HE DIDN'T REALIZE YEMEN HAD DO MANY SPECIALISTS IN GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS.) I CONTINUED THAT AS IN THE PAST I WAS NOT CALLING ON HIM TO OFFER ADVICE OR TO INTERFERE IN YEMEN'S AFFAIR IN ANY WAY. THE US GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE WISH TO REAFFIRM THEIR DESIRE TO SEE STABILITY AND PROSPERITY OBTAIN IN YEMEN AND THUS MY EMBASSY AND I STAND READY TO HELP IN ANY WAY WE CAN TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS IN COOPERATION WITH YEMEN AS WELL AS WITH YEMEN'S OTHER PENINSULAR FRIENDS. WITH THE US, "IT WILL BE BUSINESS AS USUAL."

5. AS AN EXAMPLE OF OUR SUPPORT FOR YEMEN I THEN WENT THROUGH THE KINDS OF PROGRAMS WE ARE PRESENTLY ENGAGED IN IN BOTH THE DEVELOPMENTAL AND MILITARY AREAS. I NOTED SEVERAL AID PROJECTS AS WELL AS THE CONTINUED DELIVERIES OF ARMS UNDER THE TERMS OF THE YEMEN-SAUDI-US AGREEMENT. I ALSO EXPRESSED THE USG'S READINESS TO CONSIDER MODERNIZATION OF THE AIR FORCE AT SUCH TIME AS THE SAUDIS AND YEMENIS WORK OUT THE DETAILS. IN THIS LATTER REGARD, GHASHMI SAID THAT SAUDIS HAVE NOT YET RAISED THE SUBJECT BUT THAT HE INTENDS TO DO SO AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME.

6. GHASHMI THANKED ME FOR MY WORDS OF SUPPORT

AND STATED TH2 #3 *7))6 -0043:8-53 2#-5 5#3 7 &

-, \$ 5#3 -.348:-, 3.?- 6 #-;3 \$9,3 8, 5#3 0- 5

*94 YEMEN AND THAT NOW HIS ONLY HOPE IS THAT YEMENI-US RELATIONS WILL EVEN GET BETTER. IN THIS CONTEXT, HE ADDED THAT SOVIET AMBASSADOR HAS ALREADY CALLED ON HIM TO EXPRESS DESIRE FOR GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN SOVIET UNION AND YEMEN. BUT GHASHMI DISMISSED THIS DESIRE AS "EMPTY WORDS." HE CONTINUED THAT RUSSIANS CONFIDENTIAL

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"ARE UNHAPPY WITH ME BECAUSE THEY KNOW WHAT MY TRUE FEELINGS ARE." GHASHMI ALSO EMPHASIZED NEED FOR GOOD RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA AND STRESSED THAT THESE RELATIONS SHOULD BE MARKED WITH CANDOR AND SINCERITY, WHERE A "YES" MEANS "YES" AND A "NO" MEANS "NO." HE PLEDGED TO WORK CLOSELY WITH THE SAUDIS AND ALSO EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING THAT WHILE U.S. DOES NOT PLAY MEDIATING ROLE, IT IS A FRIEND OF BOTH AND THEREFORE AVAILABLE AS NEEDED.

7 GHASHMI THEN WENT ON TO STRESS THAT THE INTERNAL SITUATION IN YEMEN IS UNDER CONTROL AND THAT THE ARMY AND GOVERNMENT ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO ENSURE SECURITY AND STABILITY AS WELL AS TO CONTINUE THE PROGRAMS AND POLICIES OF THE LATE PRESIDENT HAMID. GHASHMI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT RUMORS R034 8 5(8, 5#3 :97,546 :9,,3:58,& #8. 285# 5#3 \$3-5# 9*)-53 043 8\$3,5 #-.\$8. GHASHMI EMPHASIZED THAT HIS CONSCIENCE IS "CLEAR BEFORE GOD" AND THAT HE IS NOT GOING TO DIGNIFY THESE CHARGES BY REBUTTING THEM.

8. GHASHMI THEN TOLD ME THAT INVESTIGATIONS CONTINUE ON THE MURDER OF THE PRESIDENT AND SAID THAT THERE HAVE ALREADY BEEN "MANY ARRESTS." (HE NOTED IN AN ASIDE THAT THE ARRESTS ARE BEING KEPT SECRET.) IN THIS CONNECTION, HE NOTED THAT AN EFFORT IS BEING MADE TO SEE IF THERE IS ANY LINK BETWEEN THE RESIGNATION OF THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL WORKS AHMAD QASIM DAHMASH AND HIS SUBSEQUENT PAMPHLET ATTACK ON THE PRESIDENT SHORTLY CONFIDENTIAL

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BEFORE THE ASSASSINATION. IN ADDITION HE SAID THAT ASSOCIATES OF KIBSI, HIS WOULD-BE ASSASSIN, HAVE ALSO BEEN ROUNDED UP.

9. GHASHMI CONTINUED THAT LEFTTIST PARTIES IN YEMEN ARE TRYING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION AND ADMITTED THERE HAS BEEN TROUBLE IN THE SOUTH, PARTICULARLY AROUND THE TOWN OF DAMT. HE INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE ARMY IS READY TO REPEL TROUBLE FROM ANY SOURCE IF YEMEN IS ATTACKED OR THREATENED. HE DENIED RUMORS THA THE AMALIQA BRIGADE (PRESIDENT HAMD'I'S BROTHER'S UNIT) HAS IN ANY WAY DIMINSHED ITS SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT AND CHARACTERIZED IT AS THE "BEST UNIT WE HAVE." HE NOTED, HOWEVER THAT THE DEPUTY ALI HUBAYSHI AND ONE OTHER OF THE SENIOR OFFICERS OF THE BRIGADE FLED TO THZMSOPZXSAFTER THE ASSASSINATION OF THE HAMD'I BROTHERS AND AFTER THEY HAD STOLEN ALMOST ONE MILLION RIYALS FROM ABDULLAH AL-HAMD'I'S OFFICE IN DHAMAR. PDRY HAS BEEN ASKED TO RETURN THESE MEN BUT THUS FAR NO REPLY HAS BEEN GIVEN. GHASHMI EMPHASIZED THAT YEMEN WANTS GOOD RELATIONS WITH PDRY BUT THAT AT THE SAME TIME IT WILL NOT BE DETERRED BY THREATS OR SUBVERSION COMING FROM PDRY.

10. ADDRESSING HIMSELF TO FUTURE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, GHASHMI STATED THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO BUILD A GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM IN YEMEN SO THAT RULE IS NOT DEPENDENT UPON ONE MAN'S EXISTENCE. HE ADMITTED THAT IF HE HAD BEEN ASSISSINATED LAST WEEK, YEMEN WOULD HAVE FALLEN IN CHAOS. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE HOPES TO SEE THE EVENTUAL ESTABLISHMENT OF A "MAJLIS" AS WELL AS OTHER INSTITUTIONS IN
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ORDER TO STRENGTHEN THE GOVERNMENT WHEN IT FACES CRISES LIKE THOSE OF THE PAST TWO WEEKS. HE ALSO OBSERVED THAT NO EFFORTS WILL BE MADE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT ABDALLAH AL-AHMAR FOR THE TIME BEING LEST IT BE CONCLUDED THAT A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN AL-AHMAR AND THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IS THE PAYOFF OF A SAUDI PLOT AGAINST THE LATE HAMD'I. THIS, HE SAW NO CHANGE IN THE SITUATION IN THE NORTH FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS BUT AT THE SAME TIME HE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT SITUATION THERE PRESENTS NO THREAT TO THE CCENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

11. EXPRESSING DEEP APPRECIATION FOR PRESIDENT CARTER'SKNMESSAGE, HE URGED ME TO CONVEY TO PRESIDENT CARTER AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HIS BEST WISHES AS WELL AS HIS ASSURANCES THAT YEMEN VALUES ITS FRIENDSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES

AND THAT HE PERSONALLY WILL DO EVERYTHING IN HIS
POWER TO "DOUBLE" THE EXTENT OF THAT FRIENDSHIP
AND OF THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

12. COMMENT: AS TO BE EXPECTED, GHASHMI
SAID ALL OF THE RIGHT THINGS, PARTICULARLY RE
RELATIONS WITH U.S. AND WITH SAUDI ARABIA, WHILE
ALSO CLEARLY REVEALING HIS OFT EXPRESSED LEANINGS
TO THE RIGHT. IN LATTER CONNECTION, IT IS NOTE-
WORTHY HIS STATEMENT RE SAUDI ARABIA REPEATED THAT OF ASNAJ
TO ME YESTERDAY WORD FOR WORD (SEE SANA 4215), WHICH TENDS
CONFIRM HE IS LISTENING TO HIS ADVISORS.
IN ANY CASE. GHASHMI CONVEYED A STRONG SENSE OF A
MAN IN CONTROL BOTH OF HIMSELF AND OF THE SITUATION.
HE APPEARED CONFIDENT OF HIS PRESENT POSITION AS
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WELL AS OF HIS PLANS FOR YEMEN'S FUTURE. THE ONLY
CONCERN I COULD DETECT WAS OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF
ANTI-REGIME ACTIVITIES BY PDRY BUT EVEN HERE HE
GAVE NO SIGN OF BEING UNWILLING TO DEAL WITH
THEM. LOOKING ME STRAIGHT IN THE EYE HE CERTAINLY
GAVE A CONVINCING AFFIRAMTION OF HIS INNOCENCE IN
HAMDI'S DEATH. ONLY TIME WILL TELL, HOWEVER, IF
HE CAN CONVINCE BOTH THE YEMEN ARMY
AND THE YEMENI PEOPLE OF THIS INNOCENCE
BECAUSE AS HE ADMITTED HIMSELF, RUMORS
CONTINUE IN SANA AND ALL OVER YEMEN BLAMING
HIM FOR THE ASSASSINATION. NONETHELESS, SO
FAR HE HAS BEEN QUITE SUCCESSFUL AND THE TOP
YEMENIS, WHETHER IN THE ARMY OR THE GOVERNMENT
HAVE APPARENTLY DECIDED EITHER TO BIDE
THEIR TIME BEFORE MOVING AGAINST HIM OR TO
SUPPORT HIM BECAUSE OF THE WIDESPREAD
BELIEF THAT THERE IS NO ONE ON THE POLITICAL SCENE
AT PRESENT WHO CAN TAKE GHASHMI'S PLACE.
YET, ONE HAS TO BE REALISTIC AND ADMIT THAT
WHETHER GHASHMI CAN HOLD THE PRESENT CON-
SENSUS TOGETHER IS STILL PROBLEMATIC, GIVEN
YEMEN'S LONG AND DOLOROUS HISTORY OF POLITICAL
INTRIGUE AND INSTABILITY. BUT, AT THIS TIME
GHASHMI APPEARS TO BE DETERMINED TO CONSOLI-
DATE HIS POLITICAL AND MILITARY POSITION TO
FACE WHATEVER THE FUTURE MAY HOLD. SCOTES
UNQUOTE VANCE

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